IMPROVE YOUR ACADEMIC WRITING
- AN EDITOR’S ADVICE
YOUR FEEDBACK IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

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An Editor’s Advise On Academic Writing

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11-10-2017
1. Brill & NUS

2. Academic Writing

- Essential skills to improve your writing style
- Tips on planning and writing efficiently
- How to prepare your writing for publication

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Academic Writing

“There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.”

— Ernest Hemingway
Academic Writing

STYLE Efficiency Editing Publishing

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AN HONEST ACKNOWLEDGMENT SECTION
Writing Style

Writing As A Way Of Organizing Your Thoughts

Lucid | Forceful | Elegant | Balanced
Writing Style

- Omit needless words!
- Avoid fancy words!
- Write to Express, not to Impress

| Lucid |
Writing Style

| Forceful |

- Use the active voice
- Put statements in positive form
Writing Style

| Elegant |

- Times like these try men’s souls.
- These are the times that try men’s souls.
- How trying it is to live in these times!
- Soulwise, these are trying times.
- These are trying times for men’s souls.
Writing Style

| Balanced

- Objectivity:
  A goal of all analytical writing

- Find your own voice
Writing Style

Strunk & White

*The Elements Of Style*

William Zinsser

*On Writing Well: The Classic Guide To Writing Nonfiction*
Academic Writing

Style  EFFICIENCY  Editing  Publishing

Writing your thesis:

Thinking about writing your thesis

Actually writing your thesis

Fiddling with LaTeX/Word trying to get insignificant formatting details to look nice

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www.phdcomics.com
Write Efficiently

When & Where To Start?

• Start as early as possible

• Make a plan
Write Efficiently

Overcome Writer’s Block:

• Write constantly, continuously, every day

• Create your own writing universe

• Write in order to think, so Write First!
Write Efficiently

Deadlines & How To Meet Them

• Create your own deadline
• Set realistic goals
• Remember to treat yourself
• Imagine your life after deadline
Write Efficiently

Joan Bolker

Writing Your Dissertation In Fifteen Minutes A Day:
A Guide To Starting, Revising, And Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis

Wendy Belcher

Writing Your Journal Article In Twelve Weeks: A Guide To Academic Publishing Success
Academic Writing

Style  Efficiency  EDITING  Publishing
Self-Critical Editing

Rewriting is the essence of writing. . . . With each rewrite I try to make what I have written tighter, stronger, and more precise, eliminating every element that is not doing useful work. Then I go over it once more, Reading It Aloud, and am always amazed at how much clutter can still be cut. (Zinsser 1990: 3–4, 11)
Editing & Proofreading

- Talk about your writing
- Seek comments and feedback
- Don’t take (constructive) criticism personally
Citation And References

• Citation Styles ([NUS library page](#))
• In-Text, Footnote, and Endnote
• The issue of plagiarism

Examples of plagiarism

Plagiarism prevention services
Academic Writing

Style  Editing  Efficiency  PUBLISHING

“We're looking for a book suitable for the entire family.”
Write to Publish

- Who are your readers?
- What is a good title?
- Important introductory text and key words
- What is your academic contribution?
Write to Publish

- Be selective where you publish
- Research the publisher
- Read the journal / books in the series
- Write up your own publication proposals
- Look at other successful books or book proposals for inspiration.
Write to Publish

• The Publishing Process

Pre-Publication
- Acquisition and Commissioning
- Peer review and selection
- Writing
- Style Guidelines

Revision
Editorial Review

Publication / Editorial
- Publication Decision
- Copy Editing
- Contract & Copy Right
- Layouting & Styling
- Final MS

Publishing – Marketing & Sales

Production
- Typesetting
- Proofing
- XML
- Printing on Demand (POD)
- Galley / Plotter Proof

Publishing – Editorial – Production – M&S

Post-Publication
- Promotion
- Reviews
- Sales
- Marketing
- Distribution

Publishing – Marketing & Sales
Write to Publish

Rejected?

• Try a different journal/series
• Try a different publisher
• Believe in yourself
Write To Publish

- Michael Larsen, How To Write A Book Proposal
- William Germano, Getting It Published
- Elizabeth Lyon, Nonfiction Book Proposals Anybody Can Write
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Some Thoughts on Academic Writing

Joonmo Son
NUS Sociology
October 11, 2017
Why do we write?

• There are various reasons to write in academia.
  • Getting grades
  • Getting approval (e.g., IRB)
  • Getting fund
  • Getting a degree
  • Getting a job or a promotion

• However, the (most) important ulterior reason is because we are **forced** to write.
  • We write not because we enjoy writing but because we cannot survive without it in academia.
  • Writing = Survival
Facts we should accept

• Academic writing is not for fun.
• Academic writing is a craft that takes a long time (perhaps, lifetime) to be known to be good at.
  • Academic writing is a cumulative product of daily practice as long as you stay in academia.
• Academic writing can remain difficult even to those well-established scholars who are about to retire or already retired.
• Academic writing is even more troublesome for nonnative speakers in English.
• Academic writing is read mostly within a small circle of relevant scholarly community; most people do not care what we are doing.
How do we write?

• The biggest problem: We usually do not write. Instead, we tend to spend most of available time to worry about writing.

• Deadlines—an euphemistic version, due dates—enforced by outsiders are the most effective means to let us really begin writing.

• The best and most reasonable option to improve writing is to practice it every day; but I know that most of us would not embrace this so-called best option.

• Another sheer fact: If we write being chased by deadlines, the quality of the final products should be questionable most of the time [unless the spirit of Victor Hugo occupies us].
Does writing matter?

• The more it matters (for survival?), the greater concern you would have.
  • Again, this does not automatically mean that you will work hard on writing.

• If indeed it critically matters to you, then you need to be ready to experience as many trials and errors (e.g., low grades, rejections) as you can bear.

• Failures make us strong.
  • Rejections are a practical remedy for our writing problems.
  • In other words, getting through rejections (by your teachers, thesis or exam committees, journals, publishers, grant reviewers) and deliberate revisions, we learn how to play the game in academia.

• So get rejected first if you want to learn how to write well.
Sum-up

• Without implanting writing routine in one’s daily schedule, one should give up on being an acceptable writer in academia.

• Getting rejected is the fastest way to spot one’s weaknesses in writing. So rejections are a blessing in disguise.

• No matter how splendid writer one becomes, one shall still be rejected from time to time. So we should humbly acknowledge that writing is an endless job.